



Summer 2003

## ***What's next?*** **Newsletter on the Internet**

The mailing of this newsletter has been suspended indefinitely due to budget constraints. Please continue to check out our website for past and future newsletter issues at [www.de.state.az.us/ddd](http://www.de.state.az.us/ddd)

If you want to be notified when newsletters are posted on the website, email [dddupdatenewsletter@mail.de.state.az.us](mailto:dddupdatenewsletter@mail.de.state.az.us)



### **BOLETÍN EN ESPAÑOL**

Si usted o alguien a quien usted conoce lee solamente en español llame al 602-542-0419 o 1-866-229-5553 para que le incluyan en la lista de personas que reciben la traducción en español de este boletín. Gracias.

### **ROLE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY**

*Submitted by the Statewide Quality Management Committee  
and written by Robert Klaehn, M.D., Division Medical Director*

Indications for psychotherapy for persons with developmental disabilities are similar to those for the general populations. Acute grief reactions, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression are all very appropriate indications for a psychotherapy referral. Both verbal and non-verbal techniques can be effective. Relaxation training techniques can be taught to persons

with developmental disabilities to provide more effective treatment for anxiety disorders than by treating with medication alone.

*(Ryan, R. "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Persons with Developmental Disabilities", Community Mental Health Journal, Vol.30, No. 1 February 1994, pp. 44-54.)*

# CLINICAL CORNER

*By William Hixon, Psy.D., Division Director of Clinical Services*

Did you know that Pica is Latin for “magpie”, a species of bird known for eating whatever presents itself? Clinically speaking, Pica is regarded as a physiological disturbance associated with mood and is defined as craving and eating of non-food substances, such as paint and dirt. Pica is described as the persistent eating of nonnutritive substances for at least one month at an age when this behavior is not developmentally or culturally appropriate. Unless diagnosed and treated properly, there can be serious consequences.



Several theories have been proposed, which attempt to explain Pica, but none has universal acceptance. There seems to be some basis for a genetic argument, as the disorder tends to run in families. Nutritional deficiencies, primarily associated with iron and zinc, have also been posited as causal factors, yet studies have been inconclusive. What we do know is that Pica, which requires vigilant clinical attention, is often unrecognized and underreported.

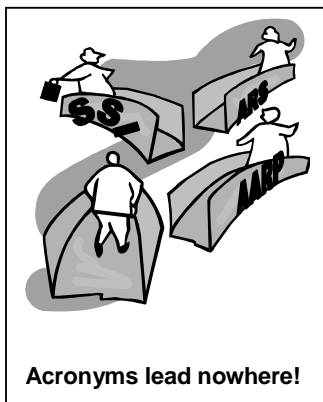
The possible complications of Pica behavior range from the obvious to the not so obvious. The eating of non-food substances can block the airway and/or interfere with the body's consumption of nutritional food. Moreover, non-food substances may also contain toxins or contaminated material, which can be life threatening.

The first step in treating Pica is to determine its causes whenever possible. For instance, in cases of malnutrition, the cause is obvious and the treatment is the provision of an individually designed nutritional diet. When the causes are not so obvious, which is often the case, treatment generally falls into the psychoeducational and behavioral domains.

Educating the person and his or her support network regarding the risks and course of the disorder are essential initial treatment steps. Thereafter, functional analysis of behavior is critical to get a solid understanding of the antecedents and consequences of the behavior. Positive attention and reinforcement, modeling, behavioral shaping and similar positive techniques are often used. An effort must always be made to identify and eliminate or manage any significant life stressors. Notwithstanding the potential value of these treatment strategies, the maintenance of a safe, sterile environment with constant monitoring is often required to prevent harm.

We encourage anyone who observes or suspects Pica behavior to notify your doctor, health care professional and/or support coordinator so it can be monitored and treated.

Be safe and well!



## INFORMATION BRIEFS OFFER HELP WITH BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

Information briefs on research-based intervention practices and programs for children with behavioral problems are published by the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice (CECP) on website <http://cecp.air.org/familybriefs>. The briefs translate research on effective intervention practices using a format that is easy to understand and useful for family members and practitioners. CECP can be reached by calling 888-457-1551.

This website is featured in the Autism Society of America (ASA) online newsletter May 15, 2003 issue. Contact ASA at [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org) or call 800-3AUTISM (800-328-8476) for more information.

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